

City Regions summary work plan

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This report summarises the Board's projects and programmes for the 2023/24 cycle.

LGA Plan Theme: Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy

Recommendation(s)

That the Board comment on and agree the activity, including revised proposals on strategic housing and transport.

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Background

1. Following discussions with the Board and Lead Members, officers have refined the Board's work plan to reflect members' priorities under the Board's over-arching themes. This is appended at **Annex A** under the priorities agreed by the Board at its first meeting.
2. Within each theme, the Board will advocate for the particular needs and opportunities of city regions and urban areas.
3. Where the workstream is 'ongoing', we will use a variety of channels to promote our messages, including responding to inquiries; commenting on announcements and media stories; briefing for meetings and events, and contributing to corporate activity such as Budget submissions.
4. Officers will update verbally at the meeting on any matters arising from the Autumn Statement that will have an impact on proposed activity.

Strategic housing and transport

5. Following discussions with lead members, it is proposed that the Board develop a work programme for the year that aligns with members' key interests in this area. The Board's remit will be centred around how housing and transport can act as drivers to promote and distribute growth to benefit communities. In particular the Board's remit will include:
 - 5.1. Councils' role in responding to housing need and place shaping, including using their own stock as well as new development to address key issues and create growth and opportunities locally and regionally.
 - 5.2. Councils' role in developing public transport strategies, including inter-city transport links, and the relationship between transport and inclusive and sustainable growth and prosperity.
6. Members had previously discussed their interest in using the January and March Board meetings as focussed discussions on these topics. It is proposed that the January meeting focus on transport, including a Board 'study visit' to a council doing innovative work in this space, with the March Board focusing on housing.
7. Members are invited to comment on specific aspects of strategic housing and transport they wish to focus on. This might include, for instance, research to support further powers in devolution deals or extended more widely to councils; innovative models for funding transport investment; the relationship between places and Homes England; or collecting and promoting good practice in using housing in place shaping. Officers will work with lead members to agree priority areas for this Board cycle, including any research or analysis that may need to be commissioned.

Implications for Wales

8. Most areas of the Board's work are devolved, but officers will share learning with the Welsh Local Government Association as needed.

Financial Implications

9. All commitments can be met from the Board's policy budget. Any further commitments may have to be considered for the next financial year.

Equalities implications

10. The Board has sought to reflect the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout its work programme, including the particular needs of communities in urban areas. An equalities champion is due to be centrally appointed to the Board in the autumn.

Next steps

11. Officers will work with lead members to agree the additional work programme activity to support the strategic housing and transport work strands.

Annex A

<h3>Removing barriers to councils' abilities to support inclusive and sustainable local growth</h3>	
Councils' role in growth and prosperity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with WPI Economics to develop proposals to strengthen councils' role in local economies. 	November 2023
Funding for growth	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissioning research on alternative models for local growth funding to inform national policy development and the LGA's Local Government White Paper. 	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to make the case for reducing the number of competitive, short-term funding pots, including through the Government's funding simplification plan. 	Ongoing
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) integration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with a commissioned provider to support councils to reduce risks and maximise opportunities in integrating LEP functions, and generate learning for the sector. 	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making the case for adequate funding to accompany new responsibilities. 	Ongoing
<h3>Embedding our Work Local proposals into national policy</h3>	
Entrenching our Work Local proposals with political parties and stakeholders	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on our Work Local campaign to expand the detail of how our proposals would work in practice. 	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embedding our proposals in party manifestos and engaging civil servants from across Whitehall, including through facilitating better communication between councils and departments. 	Ongoing
The importance of transport for skills and employment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining how the transport system impacts people and places by limiting or enabling access to skills, training, and the labour market and making recommendations for change. 	Summer 2024
Sector-specific skills policy: future of energy; nature recovery	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on our green jobs framework to make the case for a more localised skills and employment systems that can develop the necessary skills pipelines for particular industries or sectors as directed by the Board. 	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support councils in their delivery of the UK Shared Prosperity fund through the LGA's officer network and ensure learning is fed back to DLUHC and others to improve future processes. 	Ongoing

Influencing Youth Employment UK's Youth Commission on the impact of the DfE's reforms to post-16 qualifications	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influence the Commission's findings to ensure the role and needs of local authorities are effectively represented. 	January 2024
Making the case for investment in urban areas and city regions within the framework of a more devolved and place-based approach	
Making the case for further devolution to city region and urban areas	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the Levelling Up White Paper, LGA Levelling Up Locally Inquiry and Trailblazer deals, continuing to highlight the LGA's view that all areas that want it should be able to benefit from devolution, and that this should not be contingent on having a directly elected Mayor. 	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcasing the Board's progress and further pressing the case for the potential of urban areas at the third annual urban summit. 	June 2024
Best practice in health devolution	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the report of the joint LGA and NHS Confederation working group, share good practice and recommendations for how devolution areas and Integrated Care Systems can best work together. 	January 2024
Promoting the role of urban areas and city regions in strategic housing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused discussion at the Board meeting, including external speaker(s) 	March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further activity as directed by members 	TBC
Promoting the role of urban areas and city regions in strategic transport	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focused discussion at the Board meeting, including study visit 	January 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further activity as directed by members 	TBC